

THE
LAWFULNES
OF

Hearing the Publick Ministers

OF THE
Church of England.
PROVED,

By { Mr. PHILIP NYE,
AND
{ Mr. JOHN ROBINSON,

Two Eminent Congregational Divines.

Together with the Judgment of Dr. Goodwin, Dr. Owen, and other INDEPENDENTS, as well Ancient as Modern, concerning *Forms of Prayer, Parish-Churches, and Communion* with them: And the Judgment of other Nonconformists about *Kneeling at the Sacrament.*

Published, as well to satisfy those that yet scruple Communion with the Church, as to vindicate those that have complied, from the uncharitable Censures of those that vilify them, as Temporizers; or that they have done so to qualify themselves for an Office, to serve a Turn, or to save themselves from the Penal Laws.

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TO THE READER.

THe design of these Sheets, is, to satisfy the Consciences of those Dissenters that hold Communion with the Church of England unlawful; beseeching them seriously to consider what is here said (in order to the Church's Peace, and to prevent their designed ruin) by Learned and Holy Men that are of the Separation, commonly called Independents. I have quoted none of the Presbyterian Perswasion (only in the business of kneeling at the Sacrament) because it would be an endless work, they generally (both Ancient and Modern) having asserted the lawfulness of (at least) Lay-Communion with the Church of England. And besides, I perceive their Arguments will not prevail with Independents who deny a National Church: I know there are many that are convinced it is lawful to Hear Sermons, but not the Liturgy as an imposed Form. They may find here, what the Reverend and Learned Dr. Owen says concerning Forms of Prayer, in the latter end of these Sheets. And whereas they complain the Church-Prayers are empty Forms; I wish they would come and fill them with Spirit and Zeal. But the greatest Scruple that hinders them, is kneeling at the Sacrament; and that which pinches them most, is, that this Gesture is said to be Adoration given to the Elements; but they should consider what the Church says concerning that Gesture, which me thinks should remove that Scruple, and satisfy every reasonable Man in that particular, which for their satisfaction I here quote at large, Viz.

Whereas it is ordained in this Office, for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, that the Communicants should receive the same Kneeling;

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ing; (which Order is well meant, for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the Benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy Receivers, and for the avoiding of such prophanation, and disorder in the Holy Communion, as might otherwise ensue); Yet, lest the same Kneeling should by any Persons, either out of ignorance and infirmity, or out of malice and obstinacy, be misconstrued and depraved; It is here declared, that thereby no adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the Sacramental Bread and Wine there bodily received, or unto any Corporal Presence of Christ's natural Flesh and Blood. For the Sacramental Bread and Wine remains still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored, (for that were Idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians) and the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's natural Body, to be at one time in more places than one.

This Caution (which wholly denies Transubstantiation) together with that Prayer about the Gunpowder-Treason, being now incorporated in our Liturgie, do (as Dr. Goodwin told a Reverend Doctor of the Church of England, now living) make it impossible there should be any Reconciliation with the Church of Rome.

The Reverend and Learned Mr. Perkins (an old Puritan) says to this effect, That that Adoration used in the Sacrament, is not terminated in the Elements, but a token of Godly Reverence to Christ himself sitting in Glory, &c.

Mr. Cartwright says also, That a Man must not refuse to receive the Sacrament kneeling, when he cannot have it otherwise.

Mr. Fenner speaks to the same purpose.

And the Learned Mr. Vines says, That Gestures at Receiving, are Moveables, and not of the Free-hold of this Ordinance.

In short, whether Men are satisfied in whole or in part, I wish they would consider seriously what that excellent Man, Mr. Jer. Burroughs (a Congregational Divine) says, in his Irenicon, pag. 182. viz. That one great dividing Practice hath been this, That because Men cannot join in all things with others, they will join in nothing.

Mr.



Mr. PHILIP NY's Resolution of this Case of Conscience, *Viz.*

*Whether we may lawfully hear the Now Conforming Ministers,
who are Re-ordained, and have renounced the Covenant,
and some of them supposed to be scandalous in their
Lives ?*

Answer.

FOR the Resolution of this Case, there is a three-fold Consideration pertinent.

Consideration I.

About the Duty it self, *Hearing the Word.*

There are four ways by which at this Day the Great God conveyeth the knowledg of himself and his Mind unto sinful Man. 1. His Works of Creation and Providence, *Psal. 19. 2.* 2. The suggest of Conscience, even the remainder of God's Image in us. 3. The Word or Law of God written, expounded, or applyed in ordinary Preaching. 4. The Church, which is the *Ground and Pillar of Truth*, the Knowledg of God and his Mind is more especially there held forth, by the Gifts given, and Offices therein appointed by Christ. These are distinct Ways and Methods of God, by which he is pleased to make known himself: and we are obliged, even by the Law of Nature, to attend when God doth speak; it is therefore an undoubted moral Duty, to attend the speaking of God, in whatsoever way by Providence brought unto us.

The Scripture, with the Interpretation and Application thereof, commonly termed *Prophefying* or *Preaching*, is one of the forementioned Means by which God makes known himself to us; this is a *National* Gift according as God in his Providence shall dispose, *Psal. 147. 19, 20.*

Such *National* or Publick Preachers, may be said to have their Call from Christ, he having a hand in ordering the Motions of Providence

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for the Good of his Church, *John* 5. 17. And particularly in this Providential sending of Ministers, *Mat.* 9. 38. and this is the *calling* and *sending* mentioned, *Rom.* 10. 15. The Lord in these Administrations, by Preachers thus sent, *according to the good Pleasure of his Will, finds out a People before they seek him.* This is a dispensation of God to Men as his Creatures.

For Application to the Cases

The Word of God interpreted and apply'd by preaching in this providential way, is a choice Mercy and Gift, wherewith God hath blessed this Nation for many Years, to the Conversion and Edification of many thousands. The Governors thereof have successively, according to their Light, made divers good Laws and Statutes for improving this Mercy for the best advantage of the Nation, as appears in that,

1. There are Schools and Universities maintained for the bringing up of Persons in Learning; also there is a constant settled Maintenance for encouraging of such as shall be sent out to the several parts of the Nation in this great Work.

2. There is a sum of Doctrinal Truths, which in the Enlargement and Application, are sufficient both for Conversion and Edification, to which the Preachers are to assent; and there is provision made by our Laws, that such Persons only who are *sound in the Faith* be employed therein.

3. The Inhabitants of this Nation, are required to be present, and to give attendance to Instruction, that they may *Learn the Fear of the Lord.*

Affertion.

These things being so, although some of us do enjoy the Instruction of our Pastors being in a Church-Relation, yet it is a Duty that we and our Families frequent also (as we have Liberty and Opportunity) the more *Publick* and *National* Ministry, for these Reasons.

Reason 1.

Where the Lord hath appointed various Ways and Methods, in which he will draw near to us, and manifest himself, we ought to make use of all in their place and season. This is a several and distinct way or appointment of God, not only in respect of *God's Works* and our *Consciences*, but also in respect of the *teachings of Church Officers*; as appears in these Particulars.

1. The one is *Cultus Naturalis*, from the first Commandment, directed by the *Light of Nature*; and the other is *Cultus Institutus*, and a Duty of the second Commandment; and our direction herein is only from *Gospel Light*.

2. In respect of the Persons that are the *primary Object* of each *Prophesying*, that is, *Church-Preaching*, serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. It is principally for building : for a Church-State supposeth them Believers, though such preaching hath occasionally its efficacy in converting the Weak, and more directly in relation to the Children of Members. This *National* or *Providential Preaching*, is principally for Conversion, and hath for its primary and main Object, Persons in their natural Condition ; such a Preacher was *Noah*, 2 *Pet.*2.5. 1 *Pet.*4.6. *Mat.*16.3. Preaching is before Believing, and Believing before any Church-Ordinance : There were Preachers in all Nations, and in every City, before there were Churches in every City.

3. The one is from *Gifts* only as necessarily requisite, but *Church-Instruction* supposeth the Person to be not only of some eminency in *Gifts*, but *Grace* also, and set apart to Office according to Christ's appointment.

And now having seen the difference of these two Methods, the Consequence will follow ; they ought to be attended with due reverence each of them.

Reason 2.

As we are Members of *Churches*, so we are Subjects and Members of this *Common-Wealth*, and are obliged thereby to observe the lawful Command of our Governors, and to be Examples therein to others. As Members also of this *Civil* Body, we ought to join with it in a thankful acknowledging this happy Providence of God, by which we, and our Children after us, may be instructed ; which may be a means to have it continued, and a neglect thereof would give just cause to fear the contrary.

Reason 3.

If *Church-Members*, or any *one Godly Man* hath a Warrant to forbear hearing such Ministers upon this account of unlawfulness ; then all Godly Men ought at all times so to do ; and if so, the Examples of the Godly to the generality being very leading in the Matters of God, this Ordinance thereby will be little frequented, and of less efficacy to those that do come to it. And by asserting it unlawful to hear such Ministers, we imply, it were better for the Nation there were no preaching but in particular Churches : and if so, what can we expect will become of many thousands in an ordinary way of Salvation, that have no benefit at all by our Church-Instructions ? We are to walk wisely, yea, mercifully towards them that are without.

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Objections Answered.

Object. 1.

Where there is no true Church, there can be no true Ministry: the Church of England is no true Church, Ergo, &c.

Answer.

There may be a *Lawful* and *True* Ministry, or Administration of the saving Truths of God, though the Nation, or any parcels of it as yet be in no *Church-State*. We say, each *particular Church* materially considered, is *part* of the *Church Catholick*. The *Matter* must needs have being before the *Form* can be introduced. No Man becomes a Member of the *Catholick Church* but by his effectual Calling, and that is by preaching the Word. I conclude therefore each *particular Church* to have its production from such an Administration, and not this Ministry to have its original or state from the Church.

Object. 2.

The National Ministry is Antichristian, derived from Rome.

Answer.

If *Antichristian*: it's either so from their *Standing*, as deriving their Ordination thence, (of which in the *third Consideration*) or from their *Doctrine*. If any such *Doctrine* be preached, it's the miscarriage of particular Persons, and contrary to the National Provision. The *Articles of Religion*, to which the Ministers are to conform their Instructions, are Orthodox, & framed for the casting and keeping out of Popery.

Object. 3.

It offends our weak Brethren; it is a complying with the Corruption of the Times, it's an approbation and encouragement to Conformity.

Answer.

These, and other Objections of the like nature, have their weight and place in practice when the matter is *indifferent*, and may be done or left undone without Sin, and not in relation to any *moral Duty*. Though I know *gathering* of Churches in a *Congregational* way, preaching without Ordination, Baptizing of Infants, and the like, as well as hearing a Conforming-Minister, are a great offence to some that are truly Godly: yet may I not say, *If such a Fellowship, if such Baptizing, and the rest, offend my Brother, I will do no such thing while the World standeth, lest I should offend.* It were sin so to resolve: because these are *moral Duties*, and not left to my liberty, as Meats and the rest, 1 Cor. 8. 13. and Acts 8. wherein the nature of indifferent things is laid down.

Consideration

Consideration II.

About *refraining* a Moral Duty for the Evil mixed with it, or in the Persons performing it.

1. As we are not to do Evil that Good may come of it, no more ought we to leave what is *morally* Good undone, for the Evil that is some-way mixed with it. Zeal for Good is to be preferred to that which is against Evil. The greatest Good is better than the greatest Evil is bad. What-ever good thing we do, tends towards our Union with the chiefest Good, the refraining of Evil not so immediately.

2. Betwixt things *indifferent*, and what is *morally* good, you have this difference. If there be any mixture of evil with the one, it becomes wholly evil, there is nothing of good in it to give stop or preponderate; but what is morally good will remain so still, though mixed with evil. We may allay the worth of it, as baser Metals mixed with Gold, but yet it is Gold still, and may be perfectly severed.

3. When I would do good, saith the Apostle, *evil is present with me*. I cannot hear, or read, or pray, and the rest, but with a mixture of Sin, yet upon this account I may not cease from, or neglect a known Duty, not though *materially* considered the evil accompanying being greater than the good; As in meditation, when blasphemous thoughts arise, &c. To omit a known Duty is a sin of wilfulness, the evil from me in it is but infirmity only. The least *wilful* Sin is greater and more provoking than the greatest Sin of *Infirmity*.

For Application to the Case.

1. Governors otherwise pious and zealous, yet not so knowing in matters of Church-Orders, may possibly in the discharging of their Duty, and doing this good Work, occasion a mixture of evil with it; Being perswaded that *Preachers* and *Preaching*, will be accepted with more reverence, and become more effectual, if by Persons *ordained* as well as *examined* and *tried*, for their fitness; and if accompanied also with *set* and *solemn Forms of Prayer*, and other *Uniformities*, they therefore by their Laws establish and enjoyn these things. The Persons also appointed to this Work (though not approving all that is imposed) through infirmity yield and submit, rather than let so good a Work fall.

2. The things therefore objected as Evils, by which some are deterred from hearing, are the *Infirmities* of others mixed with the Duty; I say *Infirmities*, for so in charity we ought to judg. Now if I may not omit a Duty in respect to the Evil mixed with it, which is my own, much less may I thus leave an Ordinance for the Evil that is another Man's, no way mine, or to be charged upon me. This were to make another Man's Sins or Infirmities more mine than my own.

Objections.

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Objections Answered.

Object. 1.

We cannot judg such Imposition, and submitting to these Infirmities, especially after so much Light and Reformation.

Ans. 1.

If the known *Integrity* and *Piety* of some of them who have *Conformed*, is such, that there is ground to hope what they have done herein is through want of *Light*, *Misapprehension*, or the like *Infirmity*; we may then conclude that the grossness, wilfulness, or whatsoever may make those Actions more than an *Infirmity* in any other *Conformist*, must arise only from the internal frame or badness of the *Mind* and *Intentions*, for externally they are the same. If so, then it is nothing at all to us; to them it is, *Prov.* 21. 27. for in respect of the lawfulness of our joyning with the administration, or unlawfulness, whether it be done with a better or worse mind, is not observable by us; outward and visible Sins only pollute others that be in relation. If *Envy*, *Pride*, *Hypocrisy*, or the like Evils of the *Mind* did so, we should be constantly guilty of other Men's Sins, and without Remedy.

Ans. 2.

What-ever Sins are in the Person as to himself, they are to me but as Sins of *Infirmity*, that is, such Evils adhering to the *Worship* as I have no power to prevent; I may and ought to mourn for such mixtures, as for my own *Infirmities*, but avoid them I cannot without I avoid the *Duty*.

Object. 2.

There is much Error mingled with the few Truths they preach, as Popery, Arminianism, &c. There are also invective Reflections, yea, railings against the People of God.

Ans. 1.

What is *morally* Good, will bear the mixture of a great deal of Evil, and yet retain its Goodness still: the Goodness being from God, who is a greater Good, than Satan or Sin, is an Evil.

Ans. 2.

We cannot expect from Men of ordinary Gifts, that Truth be preached without the mixture of Errors more or less: We know but in part, therefore are to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good, *Heb.* 5. 14. A Saint, as other Creatures, though weak and newly born, hath a taste of what is Food suitable, and what sincere.

Ans. 3.

As for those intemperate Expressions and Reflections on the People of God, I confess it is sad; but were there not such against *Paul* and his Party?

Party? *Phil. 1. 15.* yet notwithstanding they are to be heard, even by the same Persons they inveighed against for the Truth's sake.

Object. 3.

The Lives of most of our Conformists are vile and abominable, full of Pride, Covetousness, Luxury, Drunkenness: How can we expect a Blessing on their Labours, though they preach Truth and good Things?

Ans. 1.

The mixtures in Sermons are nearest; the Irregularities of their Calling the next; the Sins of their Conversations farthest from their Doctrine, and therefore have less efficacy at such a distance to prejudice it.

Ans. 2.

It's God's Word, and not their own, they preach. Truth is blessed from the Lord for its own sake, and his whose it is. When Christ blessed his Disciples with the promise of his presence, *Mat. 28. 20. Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the World*; it is to be applied rather to their Doctrine than Persons: for they were sometimes left to humane Infirmities in their lives, and they lived not *to the end of the World*. If it be not Truth, though an Angel from Heaven bring it, no Blessing will come with it; but if it be *Christ* that is preached, whoever is the Instrument, there is matter of hope and rejoicing, *Phil. 1. 15, &c.* Some preached Christ who were not sincere, though at the same time others who were blameless preached the same Truths. *What then?* saith Paul, *vers. 18. Notwithstanding, every way Christ is preached, and therein do I rejoice, and will rejoice.* Those Peter mentions, they fed the Flock, the Flock then heard them, and were instructed by them: yet we are told those Ministers were *Covetous, Ambitious*, took up their Ministry for filthy Lucre's sake, and were *Lords over God's Heritage*. More cannot be objected against our Ministers that Conform, than might against the Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's time; either in respect of their Doctrine, which was loaden with Traditions; their Standing, which was not according to Law; their lives, which were vicious: yet Christ not only permits, but requires us to attend the Truths they deliver.

Consideration III.

About partaking with another Man's sins.

This ariseth from some special relation, as a moral touch: which is either in respect to the Person transgressing, or the Sin it self.

1. Our Relation to Persons may either be, 1. *Transient*, or *Occasional*. For a Man becomes guilty with him that sinneth, by applauding, approving, or encouraging him in his Sin, *John 2. 10, 11. Rom. 1. 32.* and in some cases by silence, being present when some gross Sin is openly committed.

committed. Or, 2. our *Relation* may be *set* and *stated*, either *Civil*, as between Parents and Children, Masters and Servants, &c. This will not be much to our purpose : or *Sacred*, viz. that *settled Relation* that ariseth from *Gospel-Communion*, as in *particular Churches* between Officers and Members, and one Member with another. By virtue of this *Relation*, Sins are transmitted from one to another with the greatest celerity and efficacy ; *A little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump*.

The *Evil* of another, and that *Duty* we join in, may so *relate*, as I may partake of his *Evil*, though I act nothing with him but what is a *Duty* on my part. Receiving of Rents and Tenanthip are so nearly related, that if the Person with whom I partake thus, have forfeited his Tenanthip, and of right is no Tenant, yet by my accepting of Rent from him, I make him one notwithstanding his forfeiture. To exercise a Judicial Act, relates so much to the Person legally constituted a Judge, that if I submit my Cause to him that is not so, and suffer, I sin against my own Liberty. In each of these what I do is good, but *partakes somewhat* with the evil of another. In our *Spiritual Affairs*, that is a full instance, 1 Cor. 10. 18. *They that eat of the Sacrifice, partake of the Altar* ; that is, from the *Relation* and *Connexion* betwixt the Altar and the Gift. Mat. 23. 19. *The Altar sanctifieth the Gift*. It is either not a Sacrifice, or not a Lawful Sacrifice, but by reason of the *Altar*.

For Application to the Case.

1. My being present, and hearing of a *Conformist*, is no *Approbation* of the evil of his *Conformity*, and so no *occasional* or *transient Relation* is raised thereby. *Approbation* is an act of the Mind or Heart ; It is not shewed to him or others by me, until it be *expressed outwardly* by my Words or Gestures which I have not in this case any occasion to do ; his *Evil* being done elsewhere, and formerly, and not in our presence that now hear him.

2. Nor is there any *set* or *standing Relation* between him and me, though he preach and I hear him constantly : This creates no *Church-fellowship* or *Communion*. To instruct and learn, is an *humane* or natural converse, and differs not from teaching or learning any other Faculty, though the subject Matter I hear be Divine. It's true, by the addition of a *special Institution*, it becomes a *Church-Ordinance* : so *giving of Alms*, *visiting of the Sick*, and the like, which are Actions of common Humanity, when brought under a *special Institution*, do thereby become as much *Church-Ordinances* as *Preaching*, 2 Cor. 6. 14. *What fellowship hath Light with Darkness ? or a Believer with an Infidel ?* that is, in respect to *Church-Communion* and *Fellowship*, there is none : yet a

Believer

Believer and an Infidel may Preach and Hear, may Teach and be Taught, *Acts 17. 1 Cor. 14. Rom. 1. 13.*

3. For any special *Tincture* derived from his Evil to the Duty we perform with him ; it must be either from the Sins of his *Person*, or his *Ordination* : The former hath been spoken to. As for the evil of his *Ordination*, it relates not to his Preaching, by any such near alliance, as that the one may not be done without the other. *It is the duty of all Christians (saith Ames) to do their utmost to advance the Kingdom of God, and therefore to teach others the Knowledge of God.* Why may not a Man Preach and Instruct others, if he be able, by word of Mouth, as well as by Writing and Printing Theological Discourses ? This latter was never questioned by any sober Man.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

Object. 1.

My presence at such Mens Preaching, if I be silent and give no testimony against them, will be an encouragement to their way.

Ans. 1.

If I had no other just and apparent reason for my being present, it might be so interpreted ; but my presence relates, and ought so to be judged, unto the Word Preached. If I be present in some consecrated place, adorned with Images, to hear a Sermon, my presence ought not to be interpreted a Countenancing those Superstitions, but the Preaching of Gods Word. When the Preaching of Christ, and a malicious Spirit, was in one Man, Pauls rejoycing at the one, was no Countenancing of the other.

Ans. 2.

We do not so easily derive guilt or pollution by being present, or in the Company of Sinners, though we do not testify against them, when they are not in *Spiritual Communion* with us. *A little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump*, but no more. The Contagion goeth no further than the Relation. The Apostle, 1 Cor. 5. 9. layeth down clearly this difference from that Verse to the end. He speaks of Judging, that is, censuring of others, that we may prevent partaking with them in their Guilt. By Judging we are to understand not only the Censure it self, but the telling our Brother, the reprovings, convincing, and other private Duties in relation thereunto, and avoiding their Company afterwards : and it is applied with distinction of Persons in respect of their relation to us. There are Fornicators of this World, ver. 10. and such are without, ver. 12. Now there is not that Obligation lying upon us to reprove their Sins, as if a Brother be a Fornicator, ver. 11. In some cases we may be silent, and leave the former to the Judgment of God, ver. 13. But in no case if he be a Brother.

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Answ. 3.

To *Reprove* or give *Testimony* against an evil, is a tender Duty, and we may easily miscarry, if the rules thereof be not strictly observed. 1. Especially, if publick, in the Face of a Congregation come together peaceably to worship God. 2. And the Person an Elder, at least so reputed generally by the Congregation. 3. The Sin also must be a *gross* Sin, and apparant so to the Assembly. But if it be doubtful, as in our Case, whether it be a Sin, or such a Sin; whether committed upon the place, or formerly, we know not where, nor how long since: if possibly he hath repented of it, or is able to clear himself at least from the grossness of it: I say, in such a case, were he a *Brother*, and in this *Relation*, I have no *Call* to reprove, or give a publick testimony, in such time or place especially.

Answ. 4.

This Objection renders not my coming to hear, an Evil, but my not reprovng. I am the rather bound to come, for I have hereby not only an opportunity to receive, but to do good, if such reprovng be a duty.

Object. 2.

Ordination and Conformity, and Common Prayers, and Ceremonies, are connexed with Preaching, as one intire Service; by partaking thereof of the one, we contract the pollution of the other.

Answ. 1.

What God himself in a *moral* way joyneth together, no Man may separate, only God himself: But what God in *Nature* hath joyned together, he gives us leave to separate, as Chaff from Wheat, &c. And so likewise for what Man joyneth together, especially in the Service of God, and such matters thereof as God hath not required; A *set Liturgy*, or *stinted Form of Prayer* for matter and Words to be used (much less to be inseparably joyned with Preaching) is not required by the Lord, nor indeed is there any such necessary dependance by our Laws.

Answ. 2.

Ordination is not so necessarily connexed with Preaching, either by God or Man: Scripture-light mentions *Preaching* and *Hearing* as Duties, *Rom. 10.* whereas yet there could be no Ordination; nor are they so inseparably joyned by our Laws: But if they were, it is sufficient to my Conscience that God hath not so joyned them. Our actings, and the reasons or grounds of them, are not to be interpreted in Church-Matters by Humane Laws; If they were, it would be difficult to inhabit in some Common-wealths with a good Conscience. Our living within the *Precincts* of such a *Parish*, our Laws interpret a being of the same particular Church with them for all *Church-Ordinances*: but this being

being Mans Law only, we judge our selves not so necessarily involved by our habitation. A Church according to *Scripture* is a *Spiritual Body* : The Limits are part of the essence and constitution of such a Body, and therefore ought to be *Spiritual* and of the same nature, and not meerly *humane*, as is the division of Parishes.

Answ. 3.

To speak more properly, we cannot say nearness by an external disposition of things connexeth them any more, than Unity makes kindred, or of one Blood. No, it must be where there is such a dependency of things, that the being, at leastwise the *orderly* being, of the one is not without the other. In this Sense *Baptizing, breaking of Bread*, and other *Ordinances* that relate to, and necessarily depend on an Office, and connexed with it, and so our being called thereunto, and invested therein; and if the person with whom I partake, be either not in such an Office, or in any apparent disorderly way, I partake with his Sin: so near are these Duties related in their *orderly* Administration. But *Preaching* in a *Providential* way, as by Persons gifted, and out of their Charity administering to us, or by Provision of the Magistrate, is altogether of another nature. And though *Ordination* and *Preaching* be joyned together in the vulgar esteem; yet it's not the voice or sanction of Man can bring things into a nearer Relation than the Spirit hath set them.

Object. 3.

Why may we not as well go to Common-Prayer?

Answ.

If there were no other things to be objected against those Prayers, but *Ordination, Conformity*, or other Sins of the Minister's, questionless we may: for we question not to joyn with them in Prayer before or after Sermon, more than with his *Preaching*.

Object. 4.

Where there is any better Preaching than Ordinary, especially in the City, it is so thronged, as by that time Prayers are ended, there is no hearing.

Answ.

It is one thing to abstain upon such an account which is *prudential* only, as upon the account of bodily infirmity: another thing to abstain upon the opinion of unlawfulness. Now the thing contended for, is to vindicate the *Lawfulness* of hearing such Ministers, notwithstanding what hath been objected to the contrary, and to deliver us from an Error of very ill consequence: for this Opinion, *that it is unlawful to hear such Ministers as have been spoken of*, is an error of very ill consequence, in many respects.

1. It puts us upon such singularity, as by which we divide in our practice,

practice, not only from our Brethren of the *Presbyterian* persuasion, but likewise from divers of the soberest Separatists. Where a good Conscience necessitates, as in many things, to differ from other Godly Brethren on each hand, it is a sad Providence to have these differences increased by an *erronious* Conscience.

2. Except it be the *reading of Scriptures*, this Ordinance alone, of all other publick Ordinances amongst us, hath by the good hand of God been kept and continued by our *National* Establishment free in it self from all disputable Mixtures and Impositions; and the benefit and fruit of this Publick Ministry, hath accordingly been visibly great, as in any part of the World. Let us fear therefore lest we our selves now by raising *groundless* scruples, lay this as low, as others by their *unwarrantable* additions have done the other Publick Ordinances.

3. In most of the mispersuasions of these latter times, by which Mens Minds have been corrupted, I find in whatsoever otherwise they differ one from another, yet in this they agree, that its *unlawful to hear in Publick*; Which I am perswaded is one constant design of Satan, in the variety of ways in Religion he hath set on Foot by Jesuites amongst us. Let us therefore be the more aware of whatsoever tends that way.

4. Such reasonings against *Hearing*, though they convince not the unlawfulness of it, yet they leave such prejudices in the minds of them which are tender, as perplex and render Hearing less profitable and edifying, even to those that are perswaded of its *Lawfulness*. To bring the lawfulness of known Ordinances under dispute for some circumstances affixed, hath even been of great advantage to Satan, whether in such disputes he prevails or not: For Men are either beaten wholly off from the duty, or perform it with a more remiss and unsutable Spirit, which lieth more directly in the way to prevent a blessing, than the evils of others we ordinarily object. Those disputes about the *Morality* of the Sabbath, as they have prevailed with many to a *total neglect*; so with more to a *remiss observance*, though convinced of it as a *moral Duty*. If for *substance* the Duty be so evident, as not to be liable to a dispute in it self (as this of Hearing is); then Satan fastens Scruples about *Circumstances*; which prevailing, we have as little benefit from the Ordinance or Duty, as if it were not.

*The end of Mr. Nye's Reasons touching the lawfulness of hearing
the Publick Ministers.*

AD-

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

TO stop the Mouths of many, especially those Ministers that continually from Press and Pulpit do maliciously, as well as ignorantly, tell the People that the Dissenters (especially Independents and Anabaptists) do act contrary to their own Principles, in Communicating sometimes with the Church of England; and that they do so meerly to qualifie themselves for an Office, to serve a Turn (as they spitefully phrase it) or to save themselves from the penal Laws, I have here inserted in what follows, the Opinion not only of the Independents, but even the Brownists themselves, many years since about this matter.

V I Z.

A T R E A T I S E of the Lawfulness of
Hearing the Publick Ministers in
the Church of *England*.

Penned by that Learned and Reverend Divine,
Mr. JOHN ROBINSON, late Pastor to the English
Church of God at *Leyden*: Printed there in the
Year 1634, and now published for
Publick Satisfaction.

AS they that affect alienation from others, make their differences as great, and the adverse Opinion or Practice as odious as they can; thereby to further their desired victory over them, and to harden themselves, and their side against them: So on the contrary, they, who desire peace and accord, both interpret things in the best part that reasonably they can, and seek how and where they may find any lawful door of entry into accord and agreement with others. Of which latter number I profess my self (by the Grace of God) both a Companion and Guide: specially in regard of my Christian Country-men, to whom God hath tied me in so many inviolable bonds: accounting it a Cross, that I am in any particular compelled to dissent from them; but a benefit, and matter of rejoycing, when I
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can, in any thing with good a Conscience unite with them, in matter, if not in manner; or, where it may be, in both. And this Affection, the Lord and my Conscience are my Witnesses, I have always nourished in my Breast, even when I seemed furthest drawn from them. And so all that have taken knowledg of my Course can testify with me, and how I have still opposed in others, and repressed in mine own (to my power) all sower zeal against, and peremptory rejection of such, as whose Graces challenged better use and respect from all Christians.

And in testimony of mine affection this way, and for the freeing of mine own Conscience, and information of other Mens, I have penned this Discourse, tending to prove *the hearing of the Word of God preached by the Ministers of the Church of England, (able to open and apply the Doctrins of Faith by that Church professed) both lawful, and in cases necessary for all, of all Sects or sorts of Christians, having opportunity and occasion of so doing: though sequestering themselves from all Communion with the Hierarchical Order there established.*

Three sorts of opposites I make account to meet withal. The first of them, who truly desire, and carefully endeavour to have their whole course both in Religion, and otherwise, framed by the holy and right Zeal of God's Word, either for their confirmation in the Truth; or Reformation; wherein, through humane frailty they step aside. And unto them especially I direct this my Discourse: begging at his hands who is *the Father of Lights, and from whom cometh down every good and perfect Gift*, for them, as for my self, that as he hath given us to set our Faces towards Heaven, and to *seek him with the whole Heart*, so he would not suffer us to wander from his Commandments, to the right hand or to the left.

A second sort is of them, whose tender and scrupulous Conscience, makes them fearful, and jealous of every thing, which hath in it the least appearance of evil; lest coming too near it, they be defiled by it, one way or other. This their godly Zeal, and tenderness of Heart is to be loved of all Men, and cherished by all good means. Only such are to be intreated, for their own good, to take knowledge of a distinction most useful for their direction, in things lawful in their kind, and good in their right use. Of which some are only naturally good in their kind, but not simply commanded of God, as to get, and keep the riches and credit of the World; to enjoy outward Peace, or other bodily Comfort. Others are morally good in their kind, and commanded of God, as to hear the Word of God, obey the Magistrate, and the like. Now in things of the former sort, it is very requisit (considering both their Nature and ours) that we keep a jealous Eye, and strait Hand.

Hand over our selves, and our ways. For them, they are not in their kind enjoyed as the other: neither do the Scriptures any where require of Men, to be rich, or the like: as they do to hear Gods Word, obey Authority, &c. And for our selves we are prone, and in danger to over-strain for the getting and enjoying of them, as being naturally pleasing good things. So as if out of a godly jealousie over our Hearts towards them, we keep not our selves from going too near the side, for the getting or keeping of them; we shall by one storm of Temptation or other, be blown into the ditch of Sin and Destruction. But now, for the practice and performance of Duties simply moral, and commanded in their kind, as is the hearing of God's Word, specially by God's People, we ought to strain to the uttermost, and to go as near the wind as may be; seeing nothing but apparent Sin in the way can excuse the withdrawing from it, when occasion of enjoying it is offered. O that there were not to be found some, who being very scrupulous of coming near to any thing amiss in outward Ordinances, or to any person failing in them; yet make no scruple of complying, and conforming with the World so far in the eager pursuit of Worldly Profits, immoderate use of worldly Delights, and fulfilling the Lusts of the World and Flesh dwelling in them, as that there appears scarce an hair's-breadth of difference between them, and meer Worldlings which know not God. Which latter Evils are both worse in themselves, as being expressly condemned by the Law of God, and Light of Nature; and more odious in the persons, as being more personal, free, and voluntary than those in the other, to which they are carried by the violent Current of the Times.

A third sort of Opposits I make account to meet with, more untractable than the former, and more vehemently bent against the things propounded by me, out of prejudice and passion, than the other by scruple of Conscience, or shew of Reason. To them I can hardly say any thing; (it not being their manner to reade, or willingly to hear that which crosseth their prejudices) yet something I must say touching them, out of the woful experience of many years taken of them, though not much (I thank the Lord) amongst them unto whom I have ministred.

Some of these I have found carried with so excessive admiration of some former Guides in their course, as they think it half Heresy to call into question any of their Determinations, or Practices. We must not think that only the Pharisees of old, or Papists of later times, are superstitiously addicted to the *Tradition of the Elders, and Authority of the Church*. In all Sects there are divers (especially of the weaker sort, who being the less real in their conceptions, are the more personal) that

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rather chuse to follow the path of blind Tradition, if beaten by some such fore-goers as they admire, than the right way of God's Word by others, to be shewed them afterwards.

Some again are as much addicted to themselves as the former to others; conceiving in effect, though they will not profess it, the same of their own heads, which the Papiists do of their Head the Pope, (*viz.*) that they cannot erre, or be deceived: and this specially in such matters as for which they have suffered troubles and afflictions formerly; and so having bought them dear, they value them highly. But it is too Merchant-like to strive to over-sell a thing, which we have formerly over-bought: We must *buy the Truth, and sell it not* at any rate; but must account nothing either true or good, according to the valuation which we have set upon it, but God.

There is also a third sort highly advancing a kind of privative Goodness and Religion; and who bend their force rather to the weakning of other Men in their courses, than to the building up of themselves in their own; and in truth, rather to separation from Men not only in evil, but even in that which is good, for some other evil conceived in them, than to Union with God and his People in his holy Ordinances: and half imagining that they draw near enough to God, if they can withdraw far enough from other Men. Great Zeal they have against the false Church, Ministry and Worship so being, or by them conceived so to be; and against any appearing evil in the true, but little for that which is true and good, as their practice manifests: But Evil is as contrary to Evil, as Good is to Evil; and so is that Zeal plainly carnal, which carries a Man further against Evil, than for Good; seeing no Evil is so evil, as Good is good.

Fourthly; There are some to be found so sowed with moodiness and discontentment, as they become unfociable, and almost *Lukanthropoi*; Werewolfs, as they speak; if they see nothing lamentable, they are ready to lament: if they take contentment in any, it is in them alone whom they find discontented: if they reade any Books, they are only Invec-tives, especially against Publick States, and their Governours. All things tending to accord and union any manner of way, are unwelcome unto them. They have their Portion in *Ishmael's* Blessing, *Gen. 16. 12.*

Lastly; There want not some, who (as *Jehu* in his fierce marching, covered his Ambition, Cruelty, and Zeal for his own House, under pretext of Zeal for God's) think to cover and palliate their both grosser, and more proper and personal Corruptions, under a furious March, not only against the Failings, but the Persons also failing, of Infirmity in matters of Church-Order and Ordinances. Who if they were well acquainted,
and

and duly affected with their own, both more voluntary, and greater Sins, would slack their *Jehu's* Peace, yea turn their Course, tho not to walk with others in Evil (which God forbid) yet to apply and accommodate themselves unto them, in that which is good, so far as possibly they could observe any way by the Lord opened unto them. I could instance in, and name divers particular Persons monstrously grown out of kind, this way. But that Course I leave unto them, who rather desire the disgracing, than the bettering of them against whom they deal: Or perhaps conceive in their leavened Hearts that there is no other way of bettering, specially Persons of mean Condition, than by disgracing them. But *let not my Soul come in their Secret, in whose Habitations are such Instruments of Cruelty.* Gen. 49. 5, 6.

These things thus premised, the Objections follow, which I have either heard from others, or can conceive of my self most colourable against the Practice by me propounded. And they are of two sorts: Some of them are framed upon Supposition, that the Ministers in that Church are in themselves lawful, and of God: but now yet to be heard by reason of the Abuses, and Evils to be found in their Ministrations. Others withdraw herein (and those the more) upon the contrary Supposition: To wit, that the very Order and Constitution of that Church and Ministry is Papal, and unlawful. Now the Examination of the Grounds of the one or other I will not in this place meddle with: but (though both cannot be true) will for the satisfying of the withdrawers on both Parts, grant for the present, to either Part their Ground, and so examine distinctly what Exceptions they can or do build thereupon.

But first, for the former: Supposing a Church and the Ministry thereof essentially lawful, it cannot but be lawful for the Members of other Churches in general Union and Association with it, to communicate therewith, in things lawful, and lawfully done: seeing the end of Union is Communion. God hath in vain united Persons, and States together, if they may in nothing communicate together. But he who would have us *receive the weak in Faith*, whom *God hath received*, would not have us refuse the Fellowship of Churches in that which is good, for any Weakness in them, of one sort or other. And this we have so plainly, and plentifully commended unto us both by the Prophets, yea, by Christ himself, in the Jewish Church; and Apostles, and Apostolical Men in the first Christian Churches; in which many Errors, and Evils of all kinds were more than manifest: and the same oft-times both so far spread, and deeply rooted, as the reforming of them was rather to be wished, than hoped for: As that no place is

left for doubting in that case by any, who desire to follow their holy Steps in Faith towards God, and Charity towards Men, and effectual Delire of their own Edification.

The Objections of the former sort follow.

Object. 1. *There is danger of being seduced, and misled by the Errors taught in the Assemblies.*

Ans. 1. We must not lose the Benefit of many main Truths taught, for danger of some few Errors, specially in lesser matters. This were to fear the Devil, more than to trust God. 2. There were in the Jewish Church in Christ's time, and in divers of the Apostolical Churches afterwards, more and greater Errors taught, than are in any, or all the Churches in *England*; of which also there are not a few; which if their Ministers did as fully and faithfully teach and practise all Truths, as they keep themselves carefully from Errors, might compare in this Business, with any reformed Church in *Europe*. 3. This Exception hath its weight against the hearing of Priests and Jesuits, specially by the weaker sort, and less able to discern of things that differ: But not against many Ministers of the Church of *England*.

Object. 2. *He that in any thing partakes with that Church in which Sins known are suffered unreformed, partakes in all the Sins of that Church: as he that swears by the Altar, swears by the Offerings upon it which it sanctifies, Mat. 23. 19, 20.*

Ans. I partake not in the Sins of any, how great or manifest soever the Sins be, or how near unto me soever the Persons be; except the same Sins either be committed, or remain unreformed by my Fault: Otherwise Christ our Lord had been inwrapped in the Guilt of a world of Sins in the Jewish Church, with which Church he communicated in God's Ordinances, living and dying a Member thereof. If my Brother sin a scandalous Sin, and I by just order make Complaint thereof to the Church, I have done my Duty; It appertains to the Church to excommunicate him, if he repent not; but not to me, except (Pope-like) I would make my self the Church. I am guilty of the Evil in the Commonwealth and Family, for redressing whereof I do not my duty in my place: which if I do in the Church as I can, I am free from the Sins done and suffered there; which Sins and Evils I can no more be said to suffer (wanting power to reform them) than to suffer it to blow or rain, because I hinder it not.

But the proof of the Assertion from *Mat. 13.* is of admirable device. How doth the Church sanctify the Sin of the Sinner, as the Altar doth the Offering of the Offerer? The Altar makes that to become actually an Offering, or holy Gift, which before was not an Offering actually, but

but only Gold, Silver, or other materials. So doth not the Church make any Man's Sin to become his Sin, which it was not before, but only suffers the Sin that was. But to strain the strings of this imagined proportion to make them meet ; and to suppose the Church in a sense to be as the Altar ; yet this only follows thereupon, that, as he who partakes with the Altar in the upholding of the Offering, partakes with the Offering : So he that partakes with the Church in the upholding of any Evil, hath his part in the Evil also.

And this I grant willingly : but deny, as a most vain imagination, that every one that partakes with a Church in things lawful, joyns with it in upholding the things unlawful to be found in it. Christ our Lord joyned with the Jewish Church in things lawful, and yet upheld nothing unlawful in it.

Object. 3. *But this course of Hearing will offend weak Brethren, not persuaded of the lawfulness of it.*

Ans^r. 1. It will offend more, and many of them weaker, and that more grievously, if it be not performed.

2. It is an Offence taken, and not given ; seeing the thing is in it self good in its kind, commanded by God ; and in that particular, by Men in Authority ; and directly tending to my Edification : and not like unto eating of Flesh, or drinking of Wine, or the like things of indifferent nature, and left to my free liberty to use, or not to use.

And these are the principal *Objections* upon the former Grounds : They upon the latter follow.

There is in the hands of many, a Treatise published by a Man of Note, containing *certain Reasons to prove it unlawful to hear, or have Spiritual Communion with the present Ministry of the Church of England*. This hath been answered, but indeed sophistically, and in passion : Neither hath the Answerer much regarded what he said or unsaid, so he might gainsay his Adversary. With that Answer was joyned another, directed to my self, and the same doubled, pretending to prove *Publick Communion upon Private* : but not pressing at all, in the body of the Discourse, that Consequence ; but proceeding upon other Grounds, and in truth, consisting of a continued Equivocation in the terms, *Publick, Licence, Government, Ministry*, and the like ; drawn to another sense than either I intended them, or than the matter in question will permit. Whereas he that will refute another, should religiously take, and hold to his Adversaries meaning. And if in any particular it be not so plainly set down, should spell it as it were out of his words. But it is no

new thing, even for Learned and Godly Men, to take more than lawful Liberty in dealing with them against whom they have the Advantage of the Times favouring them, like the Wind on their Backs. But God forbid I should follow them herein: I will on the contrary use all plainness and simplicity, as in the sight of God, that so I may make the naked Truth appear as it is to the Christian Reader's Eye what in me lieth.

And for the Treatise mentioned, it must be observed, how both in the Title and body of the Book, the Author confounds as one *hearing of and having Spiritual Communion with the Ministry*, &c. Which as it is true of such as stand in spiritual and political Church-Union with a Church, and the Ministry thereof, who accordingly have Church-Communion in the publick Acts and Exercises of that Church; so is it not true of others, which are not Members of, nor in Ecclesiastical Union and Combination with the said Church.

For the better clearing of things, let us in a few words consider distinctly of Religious Actions, according to the several Ranks in which they may rightly and orderly be set. Some such Actions are Religious only, as they are performed by Religious Persons. And of this sort is Hearing (and so Reading) of God's Word. The Scriptures teach, and all confess, that Hearing of the Word of God goes before Faith: *For Faith comes by Hearing*, as by an outward means, (*Rom. 10. 7.*) Hearing then being before Faith, and Faith before all other Acts of Religion inward or outward; it must needs follow, that Hearing is not simply, or of it self, a work of Religion, and so not of Religious Communion. Hearing is properly, and of it self, a natural Action, though it be the hearing the very Word of God. And I call it a natural Action in it self, in a double respect: First, for that the Light of Nature teacheth every Man to hear and listen to another, that can and will teach and inform him in any thing for his good, divine or humane. Secondly, for that a meer natural Man, *Jew, Turk, Infidel, or Idolater*, lawfully may, yea necessarily ought to hear God's Word; that so of natural he may become spiritual.

In the second rank, I place Preaching and Prayer; which are properly Acts religious and spiritual; as being to be performed the one by a Gift, the other by a Grace of God's Spirit. *Psal. 50. 16, 17. Prov. 15. 8. John. 9. 31.*

Of a third sort is the Participation in the Sacraments; which ordinarily at least requires a Membership in some particular and Ministerial Church in the Participant, they being publick Church-Ordinances.

In a fourth Order I set the Power of Suffrage, and Voice-giving in electing of Officers, and cesuring of Offenders; for which there is requisite an Interest of the Person so voting, in that particular Church, as a Member thereof.

Of the last sort is the Ministration of Sacraments, which requires, with the rest fore-mentioned, a publick State of Ministry in the Person administering them.

Now for Preaching by some, and Hearing by others (which two always go together) they may be, and oft are performed without any Religious or Spiritual Communion at all passing between the Persons Preaching or Hearing.

When *Paul* preached to the *superstitious Athenians*, shall we conceive he had Spiritual Communion with that Heathenish Assembly? How much less had they Spiritual and Religious Communion with him, who performed not so much as a Religious Work in their hearing? As God gave any of them to believe, they came into invisible, or inwardly Spiritual Personal Communion with him: as they came to make Personal Manifestation and Declaration of their Faith, they came into outward Personal Communion with him: Lastly, as they came to joyn in, or unto some particular Church, into Church-Communion with him, else not: So when *there comes into the Church-Assembly Unbelievers, Heathens, Turks, Jews, Atheists, Excommunicates*, Men of all Religions, Men of none at all, and there hear; what Spiritual Communion have they with the Church or State of the Teacher, or one with another, either in regard of the nature of the Act done, or by God's Ordination and Institution? Hearing simply is not appointed of God to be a Mark, and Note either of Union in the same Faith, or Order amongst all that hear; or of differencing of Christians from no Christians, or of Members from no Members of the Church; as the Sacraments are Notes of both in the Participants. The hearing of the Word of God is not so inclosed by any hedge or ditch, divine or humane, made about it, but lies in common for all, for the good of all.

The particular Objections follow.

Object. 1. *No Man may submit his Conscience to be wrought upon by an unlawful and Antichristian Ministry: neither hath God promised; or doth afford any Blessing upon it; neither can any have the sanctified use thereof.*

Ans. It cannot be said properly that the Office of the Ministry works upon the Conscience of the Hearer. The Office only gives power and charge to the Teacher, to teach in such or such a Church-state.
And

The lawfulness of hearing

And as it resides in the Person of the Officer alone ; so the Communion (lawful or unlawful) which any hath with it, is in regard of the lawful or unlawful Ecclesiastical Relation and Union foregoing between the Persons ; and not in any working of the Office upon the Conscience of any. Secondly, Though God bless not the unlawful Office of the Ministry, which is not of himself : yet he may and doth bless the Truths taught by the Officer, which are of himself, and from Heaven. To deny this of many in the Church of *England*, is (*Balaam-like*) to curse, where God would have us to bless.

Object. 2. *To hear such a Minister, is to honour, approve, and uphold his Office of Ministry.*

Ans. 1. If this be simply true ; then when the heathenish *Athenians* heard *Paul* preach : or when an Unbeliever comes into the Church-Assembly, and hears the Preacher, he approves, honours, and upholds the Office of the Ministry, which what it means, he is altogether ignorant.

If any reply : *We know the Ministry of the Church to be as it is.*

I answer : That the knowing of it makes not our act the more or less an act of Approbation. If I do an Act wherein I indeed approve of a thing, if I know the thing, I really approve of it upon Knowledge ; if I know it not, I really approve of it, but ignorantly. 2. If I approve of the Office simply, because I hear the Officer preach, then I much more approve of all the Doctrines which he delivers, because I hear him deliver them. If the latter seems unreasonable, so is the former much more, except I be in Church-Communion with the Officer, and then indeed I really approve of his Office, as I also do of his Doctrine, if it be according to the Confession of Faith made by me ; for then I am in former Union with him in the one or other, and so have Communion in the Acts thereof. If this were a good ground, that every one approves of the Evil done in matter or manner, where he is present, none could live with a good Conscience in the Society of Men upon Earth. Persons so minded are best alone ; for with others they will keep no Peace, no not with themselves neither, if they be true to their own Grounds. But they plainly balk themselves in their Courses, either in weakness of Judgment, or partiality of Affection, or thought want of due Consideration of their Ways.

Object. 3. *By this then it seems a Man may be present at any act of Idolatry, and do as others do that practise Idolatry, yet not approve of it. And so the three Nobles in Daniel needed not to have put themselves upon such Pikes of Danger as they did, for not falling down as others did in the Place.*

Ans.

Ans. 1. In preaching the Truths of the Gospel no Idolatrous Act is performed, as there was. 2. It must be known, that Approbation is properly in the Heart, and only the manifestation of Approbation in outward Gesture, Speech or Writing : Both the one and other are evil, if the thing be evil. But here it must be considered, that I may in some cases do the same outward Act which others do, and wherein they manifest their Approbation of Idolatry or other Evil, and yet I be free in Truth and Deed from all such Approbation and Stain thereof. The *Jews* after Christ's Death, and *the taking away* and abolishing the legal *Ordinances* thereby, circumcised their Infants, and frequented the Temple for Purification, and other *Mosaical* Ceremonies as parts of God's Worship, and still remaining of Divine Institution. *Paul* also circumcised Timothy, *entred the Temple for Purification*, and yet did not approve any manner or way of the Error and Evil in the Jewish Worshippers. To come nearer home : it is the Custom in Popish Countries, that all that pass by a Cross, must in honour of it, leave it on the Right-hand, as they may by reason of the placing of it, coming or going. Now if I ride with others that way, I may do the thing that they do, and keep Company with them, and yet not honour the Cross as they do. It is, besides the former, the manner that such as so pass a Cross, should in further honour, put off their Hat to the said Cross. But if I do this also, I plainly manifest an Approbation of the Superstition. The reason of the Difference is, because I have another just Cause to do the former thing, namely to keep on with my Company, but have no just cause of the latter. But now, suppose that at the very place where the Cross stands, I meet with some Friend or other, to whom I owe that civil Respect of uncovering my Head ; I may then do that lawfully also upon the former Ground. So, if I had just and reasonable cause either of coming or standing by the Magistrate (to whom I owe this Civil Honour) whilst he is performing some Act of Idolatry in the Streets, or else-where ; I might upon the same Ground, go or stand uncovered by him without just Blame. To apply these things to the Objection moved, seeing no other Cause could reasonably be conceived of the King's commanding such a thing, or of their doing the thing at his Commandment, save the worshipping of the Idol ; they in so doing could not have escaped the just blame of Idolatry : But now I have just Causes more than one of my Hearing, and amongst the rest my Edification ; and therefore cannot be challenged therein to approve of the Ministers state or standing. Besides that, as formerly answered, here is no Idolatrous Act performed.

Object. 4. *He that hears them preach, hears them as Ministers of the Church of England, and as sent by the Bishops, and so in hearing them, hears and receives them that send them; according to that of our Saviour, He that hears you, hears me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Luke 9. 16. Joh. 13. 10.

Ans. I grant the former part of the Objection, and account the denying of it a point of Familism, seeing the Officers of publick States in the executing of their Offices are to be esteemed according to the publick Laws and Orders of those States, and not according to any underhand either Course or Intention by themselves or others. They are heard as they preach, and preach as Ministers of the Bishops sending, and the Parishes receiving, to which they are sent by them. And so I profess I hear them as the Ministers of the Bishop's sending, and of the Parishes sent to; but not as my Ministers either sending, or sent to, except I be of those Parishes, or at least in Ecclesiastical Union with them. Every one, whether of a false Church, or no Church, or excommunicated from the Church, that hears me, hears me as the Pastor of the Church which I serve, but not as his Pastor, I suppose, nor in way of any his spiritual Communion with mine Office of Pastorship. Secondly, By *hearing* and *receiving* there, Christ's means properly the *hearkning to*, believing and obeying the Doctrine taught by the Apostles, which many *despised*, unto whom he opposeth the former that *heard* it. Now the Ministers in the Parishes have not the Doctrines of the Gospel from the Bishops, as they have their Office; but from God in his Word, and so far forth as a Man hears, that is, hearkens to, and *receives* them by receiving it, he so far hearkens to and receives Christ.

Object. 5. *Yet such as hear them, have Communion with their Office of Ministry what in them lies.*

Ans. That is, they have no Communion at all with it, if it lie not in them to have any, as it doth not. If I hold up my Hand as high as I can, I touch Heaven with my Finger, what in me lies: Do I therefore at all touch it? If such think to have, any such Communion, it is their Error and Ignorance, but makes not the thing to be the more, than if they thought not so.

Object. 6. *Is there then no Communion at all between the Teacher, and taught? What Profit then comes there by such Hearing?*

Ans. The Church-Officer feeds the Flock and Church over which he is set, as the Object of his Ministry; such as come in (being not in Church-Union therewith) hear him so doing; and, as a Stander-by, hearing me talk to, or dispute with another (tho I speak not a word to him) may

may reap as much, and more Fruit by my Speech, than he to whom I direct it ; so may and doth it often come to pass with him that hears the Minister feed the Flock whose Minister he is, tho he be no part of it : He may reap Fruit by hearing him feed his Flock, or seeing him minister Baptism to any Member thereof : Here is Communion only in the effects of the Truths taught. It were Usurpation in any to partake in a Church-Priviledg (which the Office of Ministry is) that were not in a Church-State first ; and so if hearing simply imported Church-Communion, none but Church-Members might lawfully hear.

Object. 7. *In the true Church indeed is Order, that the Church-Covenant go before Church-Communion, but not so in the false.*

Answ. In the true Church there may be unlawful Church-Communion without a preceeding Church-Covenant, as well as in the other ; to wit, if an Act of Communion (properly) pass between the Church, and him that is no Church-Member ; as for Example, Participation in the Sacraments ; but hearing being not properly an Act of Communion, cannot import Communion necessarily with the one or other ; not otherwise then according to a fore-going Church-Union ; whereas to partake in the Lord's Supper imports Communion in both lawful in him ; that is, a lawful Church-Member, and unlawful in him that is not in such a Church-State.

Object. 8. *But it is the Order of the Church of England, that all that hear, are, and so are reputed Members of that Church.*

Answ. I deny that there is any such Order ; let the Law or Canon either be shewed that so orders things.

Excommunicates are permitted to hear Sermons, tho not Divine Service, as they call it. 2. What if there were such an Order ? It no more either made or declared me to be a Member there, than doth my dwelling in such or such a Parish make me a Member of that Parish-Church ; which latter is indeed the Law and Order there. If the Church with me should make a Law, Canon, or Order, that all that come in and hear me preach, should thereby become Members of it ; we were the more foolish in making such an Order, but they never a whit the nearer either for Membership or Communion.

Object. 9. *He that hears, appears to have Communion with the Church, and Ministry, and all Appearance of Evil is to be avoided : 1 Thess. 5. 22.*

Answ. The Scripture is not to be understood of all that appears Evil to Others, out of an erroneous and deceived Judgment ; for then we must abstain from almost all Good ; seeing there are some to whom almost all Good seems Evil ; but it is meant either of the Doctrine in Prophecy, of which I have some probable Suspicion ; of which the

Apostle seems properly to speak; or of that which appears Evil to a rightly discerning eye. By this imagined Exposition I might not hire a House in a Parish where I were not known: seeing thereby I appear a Parish-member.

Object. 10. *None can hear without a Preacher, nor Preach except he be sent, Rom. 10. 14, 15. Therefore I cannot lawfully hear him that hath not a lawful sending.*

Answ. That conclusion is neither in Text, nor sound: I may lawfully hear him that hath no lawful Calling, as I have formerly shewed.

2. The Apostle's meaning there, is not to shew what is unlawful, but what is impossible. It is impossible to believe without hearing, and impossible to hear without preaching, and impossible to preach without the sending there intended; that is, without God's gracious work of Providence in raising up of Men, by enabling, and disposing them to preach for the effectual calling of the Elect of God, of which he there speaks. If any make a Question, Whether Faith come by the hearing of the Preachers there? It is more questionable, whether they themselves want not Faith, which are so barren of Charity, in which true Faith is fruitful. If Faith come by the Preaching in *England* to any; it follows thereupon that such Preachers are sent in the Apostle's sense.

Object. 11. *The Sheep of Christ hear his Voice, but strangers they will not hear. John 10. 3, 8, 27.*

Answ. Christ does not there speak of the outward Hearing, but of the hearkning unto; that is, as he expounds himself, ver. 3, 4, 5, 14, 15, 16, 17. of the *knowing* and *believing* of his Voice, and following it. So Chap. 9. *I told you before, and ye did not hear*; that is, not believe, ver. 27. And, *God hears not Sinners*, ver. 31. that is, approves not of them and their Prayers. So Chap. 11. *I know that thou hearest me always*; and a thousand times in the Scriptures. The drift of Christ in the place is (without question) to shew the difference between such as were his Sheep, and such as were not his Sheep. His Sheep heard his Voice, and they which were not his Sheep heard not his Voice. But they which were not his Sheep, nor heard his Voice, as there he speaks, heard him preach outwardly as well as the rest which were his Sheep: Besides, they which were his Sheep, and would not hear Strangers in the Lord's Sense, heard outwardly those Strangers preach, and by hearing them discovered them to be Strangers, that is, false Prophets. The Strangers of whom he speaks were of the true Church, and of *Israel*, but brought false Doctrine tending to kill the Soul. Such Strangers none should hear, that is, believe and follow.

Object.

Object. 12. *The Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament warn God's People of false Prophets, which the Ministers of that Church are, having an unlawful Calling.*

Ans. 1. They warn, not to hearken unto them, nor to believe them, Deut. 13. 3. 1 John 4. 1. but to try them, which without hearing them, cannot be done. Not that all false Prophets are to be heard by all, that they may try them, for that were to tempt God: But I now answer the Scripture cited, which speaks of Prophets in the true Church, which were to be heard till they were orderly repressed, or at least plainly discovered by their Doctrine heard to be such.

2. No Man's unlawful outward Calling makes him a false Prophet, nor his outward lawful Calling a true; but his true or false Doctrine only makes him a true or false Prophet. A Man may have a lawful Office of Ministry, and yet be a false Prophet, if he teach false Doctrine; so may he be a true Prophet, if he teach the Truth, tho in an unlawful and Antichristian State of Ministry. Yea Balaam was both a false Prophet in cursing (in purpose) where God would have him bless, and in teaching Balack to put a Stumbleng-block before the People of Israel; Numb. 22. 25. Josh. 13. 22. 2 Pet. 2. 15, 26. Rev. 2. 14. and yet a true Prophet in blessing Israel by the Spirit of Prophecy, and Word of the Lord put into his Mouth. Numb. 25. 5, 9, 10, &c. and Chap. 24. 23, &c. He is a Prophet that speaks or declares a thing past, present, or to come: And to prophesy in our Sense, is nothing else but to speak to Edification, Exhortation, and Comfort. 1 Cor. 14. 3. He that doth this is a true Prophet, he that speaks the contrary, a false. It were good if they, in whose Mouths the challenge of false Prophets is ripest, would better weigh how themselves expound and apply the Scriptures in their prophesying, lest notwithstanding any outward lawful Church-state, they be deeper wounded by the rebound of their Accusations this way, then their Adversaries.

Object. 13. *The Lord forbids Judah going to Gilgal or to Bethel. Hos. 4. 15, 16.*

Ans. The meaning is plain, and the words express that they were not to go thither to offend, and play the harlot in joyning to Idols, vers. 15, 16, 17. This I grant is to be done in no place; but deny any such thing to be done in the Hearing by me pleaded for. The Scriptures every where forbid the going, or coming to such Places, or Persons, as in or by which some Evil is done, to wit, for the doing of any thing evil, or unlawful in, or with them.

Object. 14. *They that eat of the Sacrifice partake of the Altar, 1 Cor. 10. 18. so they that receive the Word from an unlawful Officer, partake with his Office.*

Answ. I deny the Consequence; The Office is not to the Word, as the Altar is to the Sacrifice. The Altar makes the things to be offer'd, actually to become a Sacrifice, which it was not before, save only in Destination; as Christ plainly teacheth, saying, *The Altar sanctifieth the Gift*, Mat. 23. 19. but so doth not the Office make that to become the Word of God, which was not so actually before. This Argument hath its special weight, being applied to Sacraments, or proper Institutions. The Church and Ministry under God, make (in a good sence) the Bread and Wine Sacramental, in their use, which before they were not. And to the Sacraments (especially the Supper of the Lord) the Apostle in the place cited hath an eye; shewing the proportion between the eating of the Sacrifices in *Israel*, which in that use became their Sacraments; and the eating the Sacrifice of the Heathens, which were their Sacraments; and the eating of the Lord's Supper, as the Sacrament of Christians. With these things join in the last place, that Sacrifices considered as proper Institutions, might not be *offered* or *eaten*, but in the *place chosen*, (Deut. 12. 5, 6, 7.) and sanctified by the Lord for that purpose. No more may Sacraments now be eaten, but in the Church; whereas the Word may be preached to any, as well out of the Church as in it.

Object. 15. *The Places called Temples and Churches, having been built for Idolatry, should be demolished, and therefore are not to be frequented, specially being accounted and made Holy Places, Deut. 12. 3.*

Answ. 1. The difference of Places under the Law, when all other places, (for the most solemn Worship) as opposed to that one place as holy, were unholy, is now taken away; so as no place now is holy, or unholy, as then.

2. Suppose it be the Magistrates Duty to destroy them, (of which I now dispute not, nor how far he should proceed therein) yet I deny the Consequence, and that I may not use that lawfully which he ought to destroy.

The Magistrate ought to have *destroyed* such *Cities in Israel*, as whose Inhabitants had been corrupted with Idolatry, Deut. 13. 12, 13, 14. Yet might the Cities (if spared by the Magistrates) lawfully be dwelt in afterwards; and Synagogues in them both be built and frequented for God's moral Worship. *Jericho* should have been an *execration* and *heap for ever*, 2 King. 2. 3, 5. yet being built again and standing, was the Seat of the School of the Prophets. The Murderer ought to be put to death: yet if he be spared, and survive, his Wife, Children and Servants, lawfully may, and in Conscience ought to converse with him according to the natural and civil relations between them and him.

3. I know no Law in force, nor Doctrine received in the Church of *England*, that ascribes any holiness to the places. And for Errors and Abuses personal, they rest in the persons so erring. I suppose some such Holiness be ascribed unto them, as to Holy Churches, Holy Buildings, Consecrated Places, &c. Yet I see no sufficient reason why I may not use lawfully a natural and civil place in them, for any lawful Work, Civil or Religious, Private or Publick, for there is one reason of all these. If any think those places like the Idolathites, he mistaketh therein: The things offered to Idols, and eaten in the Idols Temple, and Feast, were in proportion, as the Bread and Wine (being blessed) in the Lord's Supper; as both the Apostle, and reason of the thing manifests. Whereas the place which I use (though for a religious Action to be performed in it) whether in the Temple, or in mine own House, hath only the Consideration of a natural and civil Circumstance. The Temple as a Temple (which yet I do not think is done in *England* by any, either received Doctrine, or Law) may be made an Idol by Consecration; and yet every particular place in it not made unlawful for all Uses.

If any further Object, that in preaching and hearing God's Word therein, we have a religious use of it, they err, not considering that tho the Work done be religious, yet the Place is no more religious therefore than the time in which I do it. Time and Place are natural Circumstances, and without which no finite Action can be performed; and some time and place more commodious and fit than others for the doing of things of all kinds. I have no more religious Use of the place which I hear publickly, than in which I pray privately in my House or Chamber:

Object. 16. *Seeing whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin, what Word of God, and so of Faith is there for this Practice?*

Ans^w. Every Scripture that either commands the *hearing* of God's Word, and promiseth a *Blessing to them that hear and keep it*: Mat. 7. 24. Luke 11. 28. or that commands me to *edify and build to my self*: 1 Pet. 2. 5. or to *obey the Magistrate*; Tit. 3. 1. or to *follow after Peace*: Heb. 12. 14. or to *prevent Offences*: 1 Cor. 10. 32. warrants and in Cases enjoyns this Practice, supposing no Sin to be in the way: of which in answering the former Objections (to which I suppose all other of weight or colour may be referred) I hope I have cleared it.

And for any unsatisfied, or other-wise minded, I wish I knew their Reasons either for their good, by a sufficient Answer to be given unto them, or for mine own, by admitting of them, as there may appear weight in them. In the mean while, let me intreat of the differently minded,

mind one way or other, that they would exercise mutually that true Christian Charity one toward another, and Compassion one of another's Infirmities, which becomes all that will be in Truth and Deed, Followers of Christ Jesus; and which is most needful (specially in things of this kind, for the preserving of the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace; which Bond of Peace whilst Men are not careful to keep inviolated by brotherly Forbearance in matters of this nature, they miserably dissipate, and scatter themselves, and one another, even as the Ears in a Sheaf are scattered when the Bond breaketh.

But as few or no good things of any kind are so well used by some, but others as much abuse them; so it is to be feared, there will not want, who will change the lawful Liberty this way, into lawless Licentiousness, and so take up instead of all other religious Exercises, a Hearing Course only.

And those specially of them who disliking the present Church-state in *England*, yet want due Zeal and Love to that which themselves approve. Let me a little turn my Speech to such, for the preventing in some, and remedying in others of that inordinate and broken Course.

And first I demand of such, what is this Course of hearing such Ministers, as whose state of Ministry they approve not? Is it any particular Ordinance left by Christ, and enjoined all Christians in all Ages and Places? Verily no. It were to be wished that no Church-Ministry were to be found, which is not approveable by the Word of God, notwithstanding any good Act performed by them that possess it. This Hearing is only a work of natural Liberty it self, as I have shewed, and sanctified to Believers by their Faith. It is lawful to use it upon occasion, as it is to borrow of other Men; but to make it our Course, is to live by borrowing, which no honest Man, that can do otherwise possibly, would do. Yea what differs it from a kind of spiritual Vagabondry in him that can mend it, tho with some Difficulty, to live in no certain Church-state, and under no Church-order, and Government.

To print deep in our Hearts the Conscience of our Duties this way, let us briefly consider how many Bonds of Necessity the Lord hath laid upon us, to walk in the Fellowship, and under the Ordinances of the ministerial and instituted Church.

First, We have lying upon us the necessity of Obedience to Christ our Lord, in the Commission Apostolical enjoining, that after we be made Disciples, as the Word is, and baptized, we be withal taught to observe whatsoever he hath commanded, Mat. 28. 19, 20. It must not then suffice us that we are Disciples and Christians, but we must join herewith the entire observation of all the Ordinances of Christ (as we can find

find means) from the greatest to the least. And let us beware that like the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, we call none of God's Commandments *little*, because we would make our selves, and others believe, that little and light account is to be made of observing them; lest we our selves be called *little*, that is, be indeed none in the *Kingdom of Heaven*. Our Sins of Ignorance and humane frailty, alas, are too many, let us not add thereunto presumptuous Sins, either of Commission or Omission, to provoke God withal.

2. The Church, and ministrations therein, are not needles, but most needful means sanctified of God, and given of Christ for our *Salvation* and *edification* thereunto; which he that despiseth, that is, doth not submit his Soul and Body unto (as he hath means) and converse therein with good Conscience, tho in Affliction and Persecution, despiseth not Man, but God and Christ, to the depriving of himself of the Fruit of God's most gracious presence in his *House* and *Temple*, where he hath promised to dwell; and of Christ's *ascension* into Heaven, for the pouring out of all Kingly *Gifts* and *Largesses upon Men for the Work of the Ministry*.

3. Our great Infirmities, whereof both the Scriptures every where, and our own experience warn us, shew in what great need we stand of all the Lord's Holy Ordinances and Institutions, for the supplying of what is wanting in us, and correcting what is amiss, and continuing and encreasing of what is good, unto the coming of the Lord: where we must also take knowledg, and remember, that it is one note of difference, and the same very clear, between the wisdom of the *Flesh*, and the wisdom of the *Spitit*, that the former will be sure to provide for the Body, and outward Man, what may be, tho with danger and prejudice of the *Spiritual*; the other will take care and order for the *Spiritual* State, tho the outward pinch for it. And if any, out of the view, and persuasion of his own strength of Grace, come to conceive, that he stands in no such need of Christ's Ordinances, or of any Christian Fellowship for the dispensing of them: let such a Man consider, that the less need he hath of others by reason of his greater plenty of Grace received, the more need others have of him for their supply. But whatsoever any imagine of himself, the Apostle, who was not partial, teacheth, that the very Head (the chief and highest Members) cannot say to the Feet (the lowest and meanest Members) *I have no need of you*, 1 Cor. 12. 21.

4. And lastly, It is necessary for our sound and entire comfort with the Lord our God, that our Obedience be entire in respect of all his Holy Commandments, which we do, or can discern to be such, and to concern

concern us, according to that of the Man of God, *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy Commandments*, Psal. 119. 6. That so we may have our part in the Testimony given by the Holy Ghost of *Zachary and Elizabeth*: which was, that *they were Righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless*, Luke 1. 5, 6. That is, both in the Moral Precepts, and Sacred Ceremonies, and Institutions of the Lord. Whose Examples we in our Place and Times are to follow, not balking with the Lord in any thing, great or small: nor seeking starting-holes, whereby to escape from him in his Word, which is *holy, good, and pure*. Good, as coming from our good God, good in it self; and good for us, if we converse therein as we ought, in good Conscience towards God, Zeal for his Ordinances, Modesty in our Selves, and Charity towards other Men; specially towards them with whom God hath joined us in the most and best things: taking heed lest by any uncharitable, either judgment of, or withdrawing from their Persons, for such humane Frailties, as unto which, into one kind or other, all *Adam's* sinful Posterity are subject; we sin not more by our course held against them, than they by theirs in them, which God forbid.

To conclude; For my self, thus I believe with my Heart before God, and profess with my Tongue, and have before the World, that I have one and the same Faith, Hope, Spirit, Baptism, and Lord, which I had in the Church of *England*, and none other: that I esteem so many in that Church, of what state or order soever, as are truly partakers of that Faith (as I account many thousands to be) for my Christian Brethren; and my self a Fellow-member with them of that one Mystical Body of Christ scattered far and wide throughout the World: that I have always in Spirit and Affection, all Christian Fellowship, and communion with them, and am most ready in all outward Actions and Exercises of Religion, lawful and lawfully done, to express the same: and withal, that I am perswaded the hearing of the Word of God there preached, in the manner, and upon the grounds formerly mentioned, both lawful and, upon occasion, necessary for me, and all true Christians, withdrawing from that Hierarchical Order of Church-Government and Ministry, and the appearances thereof: and uniting in the Order and Ordinances instituted by Christ, the only King, and Lord of his Church, and by all his Disciples to be observed. And lastly, That I cannot communicate with, or submit unto the said Church-Order and Ordinances there established, either in State or Act, without being condemned of mine own Heart, and therein provoking God, who is greater than my Heart, to condemn me much more. And for my Failings (which may easily be too many) one way or other, of Ignorance herein; and so for all my other Sins, I most humbly crave pardon first, and most at the Hands of God. And so of all Men whom therein I offend, or have offended any manner of way; even as they desire, and look that God should pardon their Offences.

Thus far Mr. *Robinson*.

A D D E N D A.

*The Judgment of several other Independent Ministers, as well
Ancient as Modern, concerning this Matter.*

MR. Henry Jacob (a strict Independent) in his printed Declaration 1612, annexed to his Book, called, *The Divine Beginning and Institution of Christ's True Visible Church*, he hath this Assertion, pag. 6. For my part I never was nor am separated from all publick Communion with the Congregations of *England*. I acknowledg therefore that in *England* are true visible Churches and Ministers, tho accidentally, yet such as I refuse not to communicate with; and those of the Separation, in some Matters, are streighter than I wish they were.

And the *Brownists*, in their *Confession of Faith*, printed 1616, they declare, That a Minister receiving Prelatical Ordination, if he be a Parish Minister, it makes not a nullity of the Ministry of him in every respect besides. That is, it makes not void all truness of Ministry in him, as a believing Congregation assenteth to hear him, and useth him for their Minister, when *on some weighty occasion, they joyn only to that which is true in the said Minister, and testify in the best manner they can that they do so, ordinarily leaving the Parish Congregation and Ministry for their Error.* With all professing, publishing, and practising, freely and constantly, the simple Truth therein with our selves; this quitteth us from all Evil, and appearance of Evil in this Matter, it being no Evil, nor appearance of Evil, to join with the Parish-Congregation and Ministry in such respects; and so far forth as is afore-said, we ought sometimes, on *weighty Occasions*, so to join, and we sin if we do not. — And though we do not think every form of Prayer sinful and absolutely unlawful, yet we think it not so profitable, and to some hurtful.

Mr. Norton of New-England, upon those words of our Blessed Saviour; *The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses Chair, all things that they say unto you, that observe and do.* Which, saith he, not only permits, but requires and implieth full Communion.

The five dissenting Brethren, (*viz.* Dr Goodwin, Mr. Bridg. Mr. Ny, Mr. Greenhill, and Mr. Sydr. Simpson) in their Apologetical Narrative, pag. 6. they say, 'We have always professed, and that in those times when the Churches of England were the most, either actually, over-spread with Defilements, or in the greatest danger thereof, — that we both did, and would hold a Communion with them, as the Churches of Christ.

Mr. Firmin argues about this Matter, pag. 29. Suppose there should be some humane Mixtures, are all the Ordinances of God polluted? Why do you not communicate with them in those Ordinances which are pure? And in his *Separation Examined*, pag. 40. says, Corrupt Members there were enough in the Jewish Church, and so in the Christian Church soon after, and in the Apostles Times; but you have no Example of separating from them.

Dr. Thomas Goodwin on the *Ephesians*, pag. 487, 488, 489. — His Judgment concerning Parish Churches, Ministry and Communion.

In my last Discourse I handled what was meant by the word *Church*. There was a necessity that lay upon me to open that distinction of Church Universal and Particular. I gave you two Cautions about two Errors concerning each of these, both toward the Church Universal, and toward Particular Churches. Concerning which I must necessarily say something to take away some Mistakes and Misapprehensions of my meaning, for I walk by this Rule, to give no offence to Jew or Gentile, or to the Churches of God, as the Apostle speaks.

The first Error, I told you, was of the *Donatists* of old, who denied the Church Catholick, and restrained it to one part of the World; and yet the imputation of this Error lieth upon those whom you call *Brownists* to this day; this I cleared them from, and it is as great a clearing as can be.

The second Error, was of those who hold Particular Churches (those you call Parish-Churches) to be no true Churches of Christ, and their Ministers to be no true Ministers, and upon that ground forbear all Church-Communion with them in Hearing, or in any other Ordinance. And as I acquitted these from that other Error, so I acquitted

acquitted my self from this, and my Brethren in the Ministry. I would not now have touched upon it again, but, as I said, to clear, not my self so much, as some mistakes about it.

The first is this, It was understood as if I said, that all Parish-Churches and Ministers generally, were Churches and Ministers of Christ, such as with whom Communion might be held. I said not so, I was wary in my Expressions ; I will only say this unto you about it, There is no Man that desireth Reformation in this Kingdom, (as the generality of all Godly People do) but will acknowledg and say, that multitude of Parishes, where Ignorance and Prophaness overwhelmeth the generality, Scandalousness and Simony, the Ministers themselves ; that these are not Churches and Ministers fit to be held Communion with. Only this, The Ordinances that have been administered by them, so far we must acknowledg them, that they are not to be recalled or repeated again.

But here lieth the Question, my Brethren, and my Meaning. Whereas now in some of the Parishes in this Kingdom, there are many Godly Men that do constantly give themselves up to the Worship of God in publick, and meet together in one Place to that end, in a constant way, under a Godly Minister, whom they themselves have chosen to cleave to, (tho they did not chuse him at first). These, notwithstanding their mixture and want of Discipline, I never thought for my part, but that they were true Churches of Christ, and Sister Churches, and so ought to be acknowledged. And the contrary was the Error that I spake against.

Secondly, For holding Communion with them. I say, as Sister-Churches, occasionally as Strangers, Men might hold Communion with them. And it is acknowledged by all Divines, that there is not that Obligation lying upon a Stranger, that is not a Member of a Sister-Church, to find fault in that Church, or in a Member of it, as doth on the Church it self to which one belongeth.

I will give you my Reasons, that moved me to speak so much. It was not simply to vent my own Judgment, or simply to clear my self from that Error ; but the Reasons, or rather the Motives and Considerations that stirred me in it, were these ;

First, If we should not acknowledg these Churches, thus stated, to be true Churches of Christ, and their Ministers true Ministers, and their Order such, and hold Communion with them too in the sense spoken of, we must acknowledg no Church in all the Reformed Churches ; none of all the Churches in *Scotland*, nor in *Holland*, nor in *Germany*, for they are all as full of mixture as ours. And to deny that to

our own Churches, which we do not to the Churches abroad, nothing can be more absurd. And it will be very hard to think, that there hath been no Church since the Reformation.

Secondly, I know nothing tendeth more to the peaceable Reformation amongst us, than to break down this *Partition Wall*; for there is nothing provokes more than this doth, to deny such Churches to be true Churches of Christ. For do but think with your selves, and I will give you a familiar Example: You come to a Man, whom you think to be a Godly Man; you tell him, he hath these and these Sins in him, and they are great ones; it is as much as he can bear, though you tell him he is a Saint, and acknowledg him so. But if you come to him, and say, besides this, You are a Limb of the Devil, and you have no Grace in you; this provokes all in a Man, when there is any ground in himself to think so, or in another to judg him so. So it is here, Come to Churches, and say, You have these Defects among you, and these Things to be reformed; but if you will come, and say, Your Churches and your Ministers are Antichristian, and come from *Babylon*, there is nothing provokes more. Therefore, if there be a Truth in it, (as I believe there is) Men should be zealous to express it; for this is the great *Partition Wall* that hindreth of twain making one.

Then again, This is that which I consider, and it is a great Consideration also. I know that Jesus Christ hath given his People Light in matters of this nature by degrees. Thousands of good Souls that have been bred up and born in our Assemblies, and enjoy the Ordinances of God, and have done it comfortably, cannot suddenly take in other Principles, you must wait upon Christ to do it.

In this Case, Men are not to be wrought off by Falshoods, God hath no need of them. No, rather till Men do take in Light, you should give them all that is comfortable in the condition they are in; we should acknowledg every good Thing in every Man, in every Church, in every Thing, and that is a way to work upon Men, and to prevail with them; as it is *Philem. vers. 6. That the Communication of thy Faith may become effectual by the acknowledgment of every good thing, which is in you in Christ Jesus.* It is that which buildeth men up, by acknowledgment of every good thing that is in them.

Lastly, The last Inconvenience is this, It doth deprive men of all those Gifts that are found amongst our Ministers, and in this Kingdom, that they cannot hold any Communion or Fellowship with them. So that I profess my self as zealous in this Point, as in any other I know; And for my part this I say, and I say it with much integrity,

I never yet took up Religion by Parties, in the lump ; I have found by trial of things, that there is some Truth on all sides. I have found Holiness where you would little think it, and so likewise Truth ; and I have learned this Principle, which I hope I shall never lay down till I am swallowed up of Immortality ; and that is that which I said before, To acknowledg every good Thing, and hold Communion with it, in Men, in Churches, or whatsoever else. I learn this from *Paul*, I learn this from Jesus Christ himself, he *fillet*h all in all ; he is in the Hearts of his People, and filleth them in his Ordinances to this day ; and where Jesus Christ filleth, why should we deny an acknowledg-ment, and a right hand of Fellowship and Communion.

My Brethren, this Rule that I have now mentioned, (which I profess I have lived by, and shall do while I live) I know I shall never please Men in it. Why ? it is plain, For this is the nature and condition of all Mankind ; if a Man dissent from others in one thing, he loseth them in all the rest ; and therefore if a Man do take what is good of all sides, he is apt to lose them all, but he pleaseth Christ by it, and so will I for this particular.

Dr. *Owen*, pag. 177. of *Evangelical Love*, saith, That it is pleaded indeed, the Substance of the Worship of God ought to be no other than what Jesus Christ hath appointed ; yet the Manner and Mode of performance of what he doth command, with other Rites and Ceremonies, for Order and Decency, may lawfully be instituted by the Rulers of the Church ; let it therefore at present be granted (says he) that so they may be by them, who are perswaded of the lawfulness of those Modes, and of the things wherein they consist.

Indeed he very much condemns Communion with such Apostatical Churches who are guilty of Idolatry, and require unscriptural Terms of Communion : but what Churches those are, remains to be proved. I am sure he asserts, that many Errors in Doctrine, Disorders in Sacred Administrations, irregular walking in Conversation, with neglect and abuse of Discipline in Rulers, may fall out in some Churches, and yet not evacuate their Church-State, or give sufficient warrant for any Person to leave their Communion, and to separate from them, Pag. 76. *Evang. Love*.

And, pag. 176. We wholly deny that the Mistakes of Christians in joining themselves unto such Churches as have no warrantable Institution, ought to be any cause of the diminishing of our Love towards them ; for they may be Persons born of God, united to Christ, partakers of the Spirit, and belong to the Church Catholick Mystical, which

which is the first principal Object of all Christian Love and Charity ; notwithstanding their Errors and Wandrings from the Truth in this Matter.

And the said Dr. Owen, who in his *Discourse of the Work of the Spirit in Prayer*, writes against the making or composing of Forms of Prayer for our selves to be used privately, desires the Reader, p. 200. to observe that he *doth not argue against Forms of Prayer as unlawful to be used*. And, pag. 222. he grants, that *Men or Churches may agree upon a prescribed Form by common consent, as judging and avowing it best for their own Edification*.

Again, pag. 228. Whether they are approved or disapproved of God, whether they are lawful or unlawful, we do not consider, but only whether they are for Spiritual Benefit and Advantage for the good of our own Souls, and the Edification of others, as set up in competition with the Gift before described. *So that it seems the Doctor doth not judg such Forms of Prayer unlawful which are for the good of our own Souls, and the Edification of others, and which are not in competition with the Gift before described*.

And therefore (p. 231, & 232.) supposing that those who make use of, and plead for Forms of Prayer, especially in Publick, do in a due manner prepare themselves for it by holy meditation, with an endeavour to bring their Souls into a holy frame of Fear, delight and reverence of God ; let it also be supposed that they have a good End and Design in the Worship they address themselves unto, namely, the Glory of God, and their own Spiritual Advantage ; the Prayers themselves, tho they should be in some things irregular, may give occasion to exercise those Acts of Grace which they were otherwise prepared for : And I say yet further, that whilst these Forms of Prayer are cloathed with the general Notions of Prayer, that is, are esteemed as such in the minds of them that use them, are accompanied in their use with the Motives and Ends of Prayer, express no Matter unlawful to be insisted on in Prayer, directing the Souls of Men to none but lawful Objects of Divine Worship and Prayer, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ; and whilst Men make use of them with the true design of Prayer, looking after due assistance unto Prayer, I do not judg there is any such Evil in them, as that God will not communicate his Spirit to any in the use of them, so as that they should have no holy Communion with him in and under them. Much less will I say, that God never therein regards their Persons, or rejects their praying as unlawful : For the Persons and Duties of Men may be accepted with God, when they walk and act in sincerity according to their Light, tho in
many

many things, and those of no small importance, sundry Irregularities are found, both in what they do, and in the manner of doing it. Where Persons walk before God in their Integrity, and practise nothing contrary to their Light and Conviction in his Worship, God is merciful unto them, altho they order not every thing according to the Rule and Measure of the Word. So was it with them who came to the Passover in the days of *Hezekiah*, *They had not cleansed themselves, but did eat the Passover otherwise than it was written*, 2 Chron. 30. 18.

And, p. 235. he grants, That such Forms of Prayer have not any *intrinsecal Evil in the composition of them*; but argues against the setting up and prescribing such Forms of Prayer universally, *in opposition, and unto the exclusion of free Prayer*.

And, p. 236. If they appear not contrary unto, or inconsistent with, or are not used in a way exclusive of that Work of the Holy Spirit in Prayer, which we have described from the Scripture, nor are reducible to any Divine Prohibition, I shall not contend with any about them.

Much more might have been collected, even out of the Writings of the Congregational Ministers concerning these weighty Matters, but this is sufficient. I know the Reader will be solicitous to know their Judgment about the *Lord's Supper*, and kneeling thereat; but I must confess, at present, I cannot find they say any thing particularly about it, only the practice of some of them in receiving the Sacrament according to the manner of the Church of *England*, does evince, that all of them do not deny the lawfulness of it, but that they may sometimes communicate there, tho ordinarily they do with their own particular Churches, for better Edification, as they judg.

Mr. *Tombs*, a learned Minister, and a great *Anabaptist*, wrote a Book to prove it lawful, both to Hear and *Communicate* with the Church of *England*; and his practice at *Salisbury* was conformable thereunto.

Indeed the *Nonconformists* that are called *Presbyterians*, both Ancient and Modern, do generally allow the lawfulness of Communicating with the Church of *England*, tho at the same Time they held the Ceremonies to be burthensome, and therefore would avoid them if they could; but if they could not have the Sacrament otherwise, they took it as they could have it.

Thus says Mr. Baxter in his *Christian Directory*, pag. 859. *First Edition*; Had I my choice, I would receive the Lord's Supper sitting; but where:

where I have not, I will use the Gesture which the Church useth. And it is to be noted, that the Church of *England* requireth the Communicants only to *receive it kneeling*, but not to eat and *drink it kneeling*, when they have received it.

And his Resolution of this Case ought to be considered, *viz.*

Quest. *May the Communion-Tables be turned Altar-wise? and railed in? And is it lawful to come up to the Rails to Communicate?*

Ans^r. 1. — God hath given us no particular Command or Prohibition about these Circumstances, but the general Rules for Unity, Edification, Order and Decency: Whether the Table should stand this way or that way, here or there, &c. he hath not particularly determined.

2. They that turn the Table Altar-wise, and rail it in, out of a design to draw Men to Popery, or in a scandalous way which will encourage Men to, or in Popery, do sin.

3. So do they that rail in the Table, to signify that the Vulgar or Lay-Christians must not come to it, but be kept at a distance; when Christ in his Personal Presence admitted his Disciples to communicate at the Table with himself.

4. But where there are no such Ends, but only to imitate the Ancients that did thus, and to shew reverence to the Table on the account of the Sacrament, by keeping away Dogs, keeping Boys from sitting on it, &c. The professed Doctrine of the Church condemneth Transubstantiation, the real Corporal Presence, &c. as ours doth. In this Case Christians should take these for such as they are, indifferent things, and not censure or condemn each other for them; nor should any inforce them on any that think them unlawful.

5. And to Communicate, is not only lawful in this Case, where we cannot prove that the Minister sinneth, but even when we suspect an evil Design in him, which we cannot prove; yea, or when we can prove that his personal Interpretation of the Place, Name, Situation, and Rails, is unsound; for we assemble there to communicate in, and according to the professed Doctrine of Christianity, and the Churches and our own open Profession, and not after every private Opinion and Error of the Minister. As I may receive from an *Anabaptist* or *Separatist*, notwithstanding his Personal Errors; so may I from another Mans, whose Error destroyeth not his Ministry, nor the Ordinance, as long as I consent not to it; yea, and with the Church profess my dissent.

6. Yet *ceteris paribus*, every free Man that hath his choice, should chuse to Communicate, rather where there is most Purity and least Error, than with those that swerve more from regular Exactness.

F I N I S.

